

# Holiday Blues

by Maria Delgadillo

**S**urviving the holiday season can be an exhausting experience at just about any year within one's lifetime. This is especially true, we believe, after one has suffered the loss of a dear, innocent child. We all know that it's not only the death of our baby that we face, but also the death of our hopes and dreams and the birth of intense pain and longing.

**"T**is the season to be jolly" the music in the malls reminds us. If we have trouble sleeping we're to "count our blessings instead of sheep." Impossible it seems especially in the first year. There is so much anger and sadness—everywhere—and constant reminders. Coupons for baby toys come in the mail, photographers call hoping to schedule appointments. You see so many little ones sitting on Santa's lap, such wonderment shining in their eyes. And the emptiness grows deeper.

**S**ocializing ("celebrating" seems too strong of a word) with family members and co-workers is not always easy either. You may find that they don't verbally acknowledge your baby's memory in order to protect you from "more pain" and themselves from discomfort. Of course, we all know in our minds that they have not forgotten our sweet children. But in our hearts it still hurts. A lot. And the emptiness grows even deeper.

**S**o, what are we able to do in order to help ourselves and loved ones through this lonely time? First of all, be aware that there will be at least a touch of sadness, even if there are other children in your home who will awaken you at six in the morning to see what Santa has left. Realize that "unexplained tears" and pangs of sadness are very normal and natural, even years after your baby has died.

**S**econdly, do spend time with your family and friends but do not over-extend yourself. Make sure that you and your spouse have time alone to share feelings and memories, the ones that only the two of you are able to fully appreciate. Do something nice and relaxing for yourself, whether it is a bubble bath or game of golf.

**A**nd finally, do something special to honor the memory of your loved one. Some parents light a candle at the church, others decorate their baby's grave site with poinsettias and garland, while others always keep an extra place set at the Christmas dinner table. Many parents give financial gifts to a charity in loving memory of the baby. Some families donate a toy or two which they feel their child would enjoy if they were still within the family. Some make sure that others in the family receive a gift, given in love, from the brother or sister they hardly/never knew. One mother shared that she crocheted snowflake Christmas decorations and glued a picture of their son into the middle. She then gave one to family members and close friends. The important thing to remember is to do something that you find helpful and meaningful.